Before the
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
Washington, D.C. 20554

In the Matter of	)	
	)	
Empowering Parents and Protecting Children	)	MM Docket No. 09-194
in an Evolving Media Landscape	)	

COMMENTS SUBMITTED BY TAYLOR HEALY

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Introduction

Thank you for the opportunity to submit these comments in regard to the FCC's Notice of Inquiry on the issues surrounding the impact of various technologies on America's children. While I recognize that the deadline for submission of comments was March 26, 2010, I hope that the Commission will consider including my comments as part of the record in regards to this matter. While the Commission seeks comment on a variety of different issues, my comment encourages the FCC to redefine media literacy and presents two case study examples that model two different ways media literacy should be incorporated into school curricula. More specifically, my comment focuses on the beneficial impact that media literacy programs have on children in low-income urban school districts.

My interest in the field of media literacy and its beneficial impact on low-income children stems from my work with the Technology Initiative Grants Program at the Legal Services Corporation (LSC), the federal funder of civil legal aid programs, in Washington, DC, as well as my work at Community Legal Services, Inc. (CLS) in Philadelphia, PA. The Technology Initiative Grants Program (TIG) provides funding to select legal aid programs to promote full access to high quality legal representation for low-income clients through the use of technology. Most recently, I have had the opportunity to represent low-income individuals and families in landlord-tenant disputes through my work at CLS where I have been interning for the past eleven months. These two positions have given me a unique perspective on how access to various technologies, as well as effective education on the use of those technologies, can help to decrease the digital divide and increase opportunities for children in the low-income community. I write on my own behalf as a third-year law student at Villanova University School of Law interested in the aforementioned issues. The views expressed in

this comment are solely my own and do not necessarily reflect the views of Villanova University, SLA, TMS, LSC or CLS.

Part I of this response to MB Docket No. 09-194 focuses on redefining media literacy while Part II demonstrates the beneficial impact this instruction has on decreasing the digital divide for low-income and "at-risk" students. Part III explores and examines the first of two models of media literacy education, the Science Leadership Academy (SLA), a fully media-integrated magnet high school in urban Philadelphia, Pennsylvania that utilizes various technologies in every facet of the school's curriculum. Part IV examines the second model, The Media Spot (TMS), an independent non-profit consulting service that puts technology innovators into New York City public schools to collaborate with teachers and administrators to integrate media literacy through digital media production. Part V concludes with recommendations for how the FCC can help foster the development of these models in more schools across the nation.

Part I: Redefining Media Literacy

The Commission needs to refocus its media literacy education efforts towards teaching children how to critically analyze and productively utilize the plethora of technologies available in today's world. The FCC's Notice of Inquiry (NOI) appears to equate parental management of technology with media literacy without recognizing that true media literacy entails a much more active inquiry into the information children receive and create. Household media rules regarding how parents can manage the content and amount of time that their children spend watching television and surfing the Internet are certainly important, but these types of rules are forms of "media management," as opposed to media literacy. The concepts of media literacy and media management are further defined in the comment submitted by Renee Hobbs, Professor and Founder of the Media Education Lab at Temple University, but the main difference is that "media literacy" focuses on children's "ability to access, analyze, evaluate and communicate" media messages, whereas "media management" refers to "parental monitoring and control" as a way to decrease children's exposure to Internet predation, cyberbullying, pornography, etc.[1] Media literacy requires children to engage in active inquiry and critical thinking about the various media messages they receive and create. Studies have shown that simply making rules such as "only 45 minutes of online surfing per day" or "1 hour of TV" do not actually help children choose how to spend their time safely and effectively.[2] While these rules may help "promote heightened awareness about the choices and consequences of media and technology consumption and use," this awareness is not the only solution to helping children become media literate.[3]

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[1] Comment to MB Docket No. 09-194 submitted by Renee Hobbs, Sherri Hope Culver, and Kelly Mendoza on behalf of U.S. media literacy educators nationwide, February 1, 2010, (pp. 2-4).

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

The Commission should collaborate with the Department of Education to ensure that media literacy is an integral part of the educational culture. Schools play a crucial role in ensuring that America's children gain the necessary skills to enter the modern workforce and help the United States continue to be a global leader. I commend the Commission for recognizing this need and making the inclusion of online learning in the classroom a large part of the National Broadband Plan.[4] This NOI requests comment on ways that the FCC can assist in the efforts of other federal agencies to promote media literacy. Despite the FCC's more progressive view towards national technology education and the importance the public school system plays in the future of our nation, President Obama's newly released "Blueprint for Reform: The Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act," does not make reference to the use of increased media technology as a factor in increasing student performance.[5] While the FCC can promote the use of technology in the classroom, it is the President's plan for public education through the Department of Education that will ultimately determine the baseline level of media literacy implemented in our public schools. Working to ensure the integration of the Commission's goals for broadband access and education into the public school curriculum will require a greater level of collaboration with the Department of Education.

Part II: Media Literacy's Benefits for Low-Income Students

The Commission should promote and encourage the proliferation of media literacy education as a way to increase student attendance and participation in low-income school districts. The Internet has created access to educational, literary, scientific, entertainment, and social tools for anyone with a computer. With these technologies becoming more user-friendly and more accessible, the gap that once existed between the media and the consumer has been practically eliminated as the consumer becomes the producer.[6] Some examples of user-produced content include online mediums and forums such a blogs, Facebook, Twitter, Delicious, and YouTube, which allow children from different cities, states and countries to interact with each other instantly. Children are eager to learn about these new technologies, but they need informed teachers and educators to help them navigate this new media landscape.

Because children are not automatically equipped to navigate the various technologies and information available on the Internet, the Commission should focus its efforts on developing a teacher curriculum of requisite media literacy knowledge. An effective teacher can have a great impact on a child's success in school. Unfortunately, low-income children are more likely to have parents and teachers who are victims of the digital divide, denying these children the chance to access the resources available to their peers in higher-income

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[4] Available at: http://www.broadband.gov/plan/11-education/

[5] Available at: http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/blueprint/blueprint.pdf

[6] Cohn- Geltner, H. (2007). An examination of the Impact of Media Literacy Programs on Reengaging High School Dropouts in the Academic Process. *Media Education Lab Working Paper Series*, (p. 4), Retrieved 12.03.2010, from http://www.mediaeducationlab.com

school districts.[7] Children are passive "ritualistic viewers" and consumers by nature, meaning that they are nondiscriminatory consumers that watch for enjoyment and diversion.[8] The goal of media literacy programs is to turn ritualistic viewers into "instrumental viewers" who consume for information and are much more concerned with purposeful content and are able to recognize the difference between reliable and non-reliable sources.[9]

Requiring teachers to achieve a basic level of media literacy knowledge can help to eliminate the issue of parental non-involvement prevalent in many low-income households. Teacher hesitancies about using technology in the classroom can be two-fold. Described in one study as "First Order Barriers," some limitations are extrinsic to teachers, such as lack of access to computers and software, insufficient time to plan instruction, and inadequate technical and administrative support.[10] "Second Order Barriers," on the other hand are intrinsic to teachers and include beliefs about teaching, established classroom practices, and unwillingness to change.[11] While the National Broadband Plan seeks to help eliminate first-order barriers, eliminating second-order barriers can only come with increased education of teachers themselves. I explore various avenues to accomplish this goal in Part IV below.

A. Media Literacy Benefits for Low-Income Students

There are several distinct areas where media literacy education can and has had vastly positive impacts on low-income at-risk youth. First, the use of media production tools promotes student authorship, which allows youth to express social criticism that is often reserved for a more exclusive section of the population, or those who have the means and the resources.[12] With the advent of sites such as "YouTube," anyone can put their point of view on the Internet and receive feedback, both positive and negative, from anyone, anywhere and at any time. Second, media literacy programs encourage students to take an active part in their education. These programs give students the opportunity to explore issues and themes connected to their lives, which involves them in the decision-making process. This personal involvement in the activity has been shown to increase student motivation because the children become an active audience while learning critical analysis skills.[13] They learn to

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[7] Primavera, J., Wiederlight, P., & DiGiacomo, T. (2001). Technology Access for Low-Income Preschoolers: Bridging the Digital Divide. (p. 4).

[8] Ibid, p. 20.

[9] Cohn-Geltner, p. 5.

[10] Ertmer, P. (1999). Impacts of a University-Elementary School Partnership Designed to Support Technology Integration *Educational Technology Research and Development,* Vol. 47, No. 1, pp. 81-96, 81.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Cohn-Geltner, pp. 6-7

[13] Ibid, p. 20.

separate facts from opinion by watching the TV news, for example, and form their own opinions based on the facts presented. Furthermore, this enables them to talk about political issues with their family and friends and makes them feel proud to appear intelligent and competent.[14] One study in particular found that technology in the pre-school classroom allows children to take charge of their learning environment at a very early age.[15] By allowing children to use the computer programs quasi-independently, they were able to control the content, the difficulty level, and the pace of the skill they were attempting to master.[16] This encouraged them to take more risks in other learning areas in addition to helping them to acquire important kindergarten readiness skills, especially in the area of early literacy.[17]

Third, the use of media technologies in the classroom helps students to make contacts and develop necessary social capital by engaging with members of their community and beyond. These contacts can help students become more engaged with the work they are learning and can even help them build a network of potential character references for use in future job searches. Students also have the opportunity to develop mentor/mentee relationships with the teachers and instructors who help them acquire these much-needed skills.

Fourth, media literacy programs inspire "at risk" students to continue their education by helping to eliminate the feeling that the traditional school curriculum lacks the life skills training necessary to survive in the "real-world." Studies have shown that many students in low-income school districts dropout of school because they often feel that what they learn in a traditional classroom setting is inapplicable to the realities they face in their own homes and neighborhoods.[18] When children leave the education system, they also lose the valuable resource of having a teacher who can act as a buffer for the information they receive. Research has shown that students enrolled in a media literacy class see it "as connected to real people and real-life problems."[19] In addition, students are exposed to new ideas and perspectives, which allows them to gain a better understanding of different points of view. Media literacy programs give children access to tangible benefits earlier in their lives and could encourage them to stay engaged in their academic surroundings. In addition, the "real

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[14] Pereira, T., Stewart, R., Valkova, S. and Yoon, J. (2007). Media Literacy at Fairhill Community High School: An "alternative" approach to media education? *Media Education Lab Working Paper Series*, p. 11, Retrieved 12.03.2010, from http://www.mediaeducationlab.com

[15] Primavera, p. 21.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Cohn-Geltner, pp. 17-18.

[19] Pereira, p. 10.

world" nature of real-time media allows students to connect with their own communities, as well as those around the world.

Finally, technology has demonstrated the potential to be the great equalizer in an educational setting. One pre-school study showed that children with speech and language delays or whose primary language was not English could access computer programs and be successful without words, and could practice sounding out their words without stigma.[20] Shy children demonstrated higher levels of confidence and overactive and impulsive children learned to pay attention and to stop and think.[21] While programs like No Child Left Behind focus primarily on standardized tests and reaching certain achievement goals by pre-determined times, media literacy is a skill that is more readily achievable on an individualized scale albeit one that is harder to measure. I further explore many of these benefits in Parts III and IV below as they apply to both elementary and high school-age students.

Part III: Technology Integrated School Case Study – Science Leadership Academy

The Science Leadership Academy (SLA) in Philadelphia represents an ideal school model for the Commission to focus on in order to better understand how media literacy can and should be included in all areas of a school's curriculum and culture. SLA is a Philadelphia public magnet school run by Principal Christopher Lehmann. The school opened on September 7, 2006 and was developed in partnership with Philadelphia's Franklin Institute. The SLA provides a rigorous college-preparatory curriculum with a focus on science, technology, mathematics and entrepreneurship.[22] Students in the upper grades have more flexible schedules to allow for opportunities for dual enrollment programs with area universities and career development internships in laboratory and business settings, as well as with The Franklin Institute.[23] As a technology magnet school, SLA's nearly 500 students represent almost every Philadelphia zip code. 48.5% of its students qualify as economically disadvantaged according to SLA's 2009 School Annual Report developed by the School District of Philadelphia's Office of Accountability.[24] The school is 49.9% African American, 35.6% White, 6.8% Hispanic, 6.4% Asian, and 1.2% Other.[25]

The Commission should promote early and continuous student access to media technologies in the classroom as an integral part of ensuring effective media literacy

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[20] Primavera, p. 21.

[21] Ibid.

[22] The two main student admissions criteria are 1) high attendance rate at previous school and 2) successful presentation of a project proposal to the admissions officer.

[23] Available at: http://www.scienceleadership.org/drupaled/

[24] Available at: http://webgui.phila.k12.pa.us/uploads/gb/B2/gbB2ffMKt0rnCEwC4R-LdA/HS-Complete.pdf

[25] Ibid.

education. In March of this year, I had the opportunity to visit SLA to speak with teachers and students and observe the amazing technology-integration that takes place in the classroom. I also had the opportunity to interview Diana Laufenberg, one of SLA's history teachers and a huge proponent of media literacy education. SLA utilizes a "one-to-one" model of technology education, meaning that every entering ninth grade student receives a new MacBook they will use for the next four years.[26] Students are not only permitted, but are encouraged to utilize these laptops for their own personal use outside of the classroom. Teachers and administrators believe that personal use increases student work authorship and promotes continued learning outside of the classroom.[27] The students are highly aware, however, of the school's Authorized Use Policy (AUP) that imposes a self-policing, as well as parent and teacher enforced, honor system with respect to restricted content access. This means that SLA does not install any additional blocking software on laptops that would restrict access to content, but rather leaves it to each student to respect the rules and policies regarding media use.[28] The consequences of violating the AUP is that the student's laptop can be set at any time to "Simple Finder" mode, meaning that the student can only access the SLA portal and the Microsoft Office Suite until they have proven they are capable of utilizing their laptop according to the AUP. Despite the wide range of inappropriate content available online, Ms. Laufenberg reported that on average, only around ten students per year are required to go on "Simple Finder" restrictions.

The curriculum at SLA provides the Commission with an excellent model of the positive impact a fully integrated media literacy school can have on students. Before visiting SLA, I held the traditional belief that media literacy involved teaching students how to use individual technologies. For example, if students were required to make a PowerPoint presentation, I assumed the teacher would naturally spend a class period demonstrating the program and explaining the types of presentations that would be expected of students. This presumption could not be further from the reality at SLA. I immediately came to realize that teachers took on more of a facilitator role in the classrooms, serving as a guide to student-initiated conversations, research, and presentations. SLA's "project-based learning" structure requires each student to select their own medium for presenting their research to their peers. Students are not tested based on their performance on a traditional exam or test, but rather on their presentation using the media of their choice. For example, where one student may decide to write a traditional paper using Microsoft Word, another student may create a podcast, blog or audio documentary.[29] In addition, SLA teachers do not spend time during

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[26] While SLA is publically funded, it must raise as much as $180,000 per year in private funding to ensure each student receives a laptop.

[27] Students' laptops are retained by SLA during the summer vacation period in order to erase the hard drives, install critical software updates, as well as to decrease the amount of normal wear and tear.

[28] SLA uses the same Internet filter as all other Philadelphia public schools.

[29] Examples of some of the student's projects can be found at: http://www.scienceleadership.org/moodle/

school-day instruction lecturing on the use of these various media tools. Instead, students are encouraged to spend time learning these skills on their own, or in collaboration with other students in the class. Whereas a traditional classroom setting may discourage utilizing fellow-students work, SLA encourages students to share their sources through online posting on message boards and chat rooms. If students work together on an in-class or homework assignment, they are simply asked to indicate the names of the students they worked with when they send in their electronic submission. This type of collaboration is one of the ways SLA works to mimic conditions that students will find when they enter college and the workplace. SLA promotes group work as a way to more effectively learn a new technology. Whereas traditional educational settings tend to promote and reward individual success, SLA creates a learning atmosphere where sharing ideas and resources, not only among students but also between teachers and students, is encouraged.

One of the most fundamental ways that SLA promotes media literacy is through their use of Internet resources as teaching tools. For example, in a traditional school, teachers assign all students a homework assignment from the same textbook and then use that text as the primary impetus for classroom discussion. SLA teachers on the other hand, often assign students with the task of finding the resources for classroom discussion. This method has two distinct media literacy benefits; first, that students learn to recognize the differences between reliable and unreliable sources, as well as primary and secondary sources; second, it encourages students to take ownership of their education and feel more connected to what is taking place in the classroom because they helped to find the content being discussed. Because SLA students use the Internet in all of their courses, it was easy to see how comfortable they are with determining a website's reputability, conducting effective searches, and sharing links and resources with one another and with their teachers. Other than a ninth grade introductory course that includes information about the school's AUP and other basic rules and requirements, SLA does not teach students how to use the various technologies. The students become familiar with each new medium through practice and use. While many people view media literacy as a type of elective or even required course for students, media literacy at SLA is incorporated into all areas of the curriculum.

The Commission should work to ensure full wireless accessibility in public schools to most effectively facilitate media literacy learning. For SLA, learning does not stop at the schoolhouse doors. Clearly the age-old excuse of "I forgot to bring my book home," does not work when all of your homework assignments are posted online and each student has access to all the resources they need right on their laptops. While 85% of students have Internet access in their homes, the school itself is open from 7am until 7pm to accommodate those students who may not be able to complete all of their assignments from home.

By increasing schools' access to the Internet, the Commission will help to encourage a commitment to lifelong learning. SLA students and teachers use online resources to discover additional educational opportunities that take place in Philadelphia. If a teacher or student finds information about a speech, exhibit, or presentation near the school, teachers can instantly change their lesson plan and attend the event because of the school's liberal "field

trip" policy.[30] This flexibility encourages students to seek out information about what is occurring in their own community and gives them the opportunity to get involved. These excursions also expose the students to new ideas and perspectives that encourage further research and study.

In addition to learning how to utilize various online tools and computer programs, SLA students also learn about the legal regulations involved in using these tools. For example, many students choose to use video clips, music or other media content available through the Internet in their own video, audio and web productions. As such, all students are made aware of the pertinent rules and regulations governing copyright and fair use not only as they apply to media producers generally, but to themselves as content creators. In addition, students learn how to properly cite various sources when utilizing the material of others.

By encouraging the use of technology integration, the Commission will help students engage in educational discussions in the classroom. Literacy levels of SLA high-school students range from fifth grade through college level. Ms. Laufenberg found that using various media technologies as an initial introduction to the day's lesson gives every student in the class an entryway into the conversation even if they did not understand a particular reading that was assigned for the course. She also found that tasking the students with finding their own resources allows them to find materials that are suited to their reading and skill levels. This is not to suggest that the students are only reading Shakespeare CliffsNotes or learning history through Wikipedia, but it does mean that students who struggle with traditional curriculum reading materials are free to supplement their readings with sources they find themselves, or those recommended by the teachers. This method also continues the students' quest for determining online source reliability and factuality.

Overall, SLA represents an ideal media literacy learning environment, the successes of which the Commission should strive to proliferate. The Commission's NOI reflects a desire to control access to the Internet and to help parents limit what their children are exposed to via the Internet and broadcast media. While children are certainly vulnerable to making the wrong choices about what they watch and how the use they Internet, I feel that the Commission has overlooked the importance of teaching children to be informed users and consumers. As opposed to instilling a fear of harmful content, the Commission should work with the Department of Education to ensure that model schools like SLA become the norm as opposed to the exception to the rule.

Part IV: Entrepreneurial Model Case Study – The Media Spot

While SLA demonstrates the successes and benefits of full-school media integration, The Media Spot (TMS)[31] provides the Commission with a model for outsourcing kindergarten

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[30] At the beginning of the school year, all parents sign a consent form that allows their child to attend any outside of school event under teacher supervision. The teacher simply posts a notice on the school's intranet message board so parents are aware of where their child is at all times.

[31] http://themediaspot.org

through twelfth grade technology education through consulting services contracts. The current Program Director, Rhys Daunic, and Director of Internet Development, Andy Heib, founded TMS in 1999 in order to address the need for youth media education in the United States.[32] As demonstrated in Part III of my comment, teachers at media technology magnet schools are comfortable with the plethora of media resources available to their students and are experienced in conveying that knowledge to their students. The overwhelming reality, however, in most urban public schools is that there are huge discrepancies in teachers' skill and comfort levels with in-class technology. This lack of knowledge, coupled with the large number of simultaneous new technology and non-technology initiatives that administrators place on teachers, has led to a learning gap in lower income schools. To help bridge this gap, TMS provides consulting services that put "technology innovators" in New York City public schools to work in collaboration with classroom teachers in order to help children understand not only how to use media, but how to think critically about what they are viewing. Currently Mr. Daunic has technology consulting contacts with eight New York City elementary, middle and high schools. These contracts vary in length from five days to thirty days spread out over a number of weeks or an entire school year. Some schools prefer to have Mr. Daunic provide more intensive teacher trainings focused on curriculum building, whereas others prefer to have him train teachers and provide services to students in the classroom.

TMS has six core principles of critical media analysis that it works to incorporate in urban public schools.[33] This section of my comment will focus on two of these principles, namely, increasing learning and awareness through the development of production-based media literacy curricula, and using technology to increase and reinforce traditional literacy and critical thinking skills. I will model these two principles for the Commission by reference to my interview with Mr. Daunic and my visit to two first-grade classrooms at Brooklyn, New York's P.S. 130, The Parkside School (TPS). Mr. Daunic has been working with TPS for the past three years and is currently providing services under a thirty-day contract to work with both teachers and students in first-grade classrooms. TPS recently received a large "Resolution A" grant from the New York City Department of Education that allowed the administration to purchase approximately twenty eMac desktop computers for the first-grade

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[32] http://themediaspot.org/about/philosophy

[33] Ibid. The six principles are: Media literacy is critical to maintaining independence and identity in the digital age; The 21st Century idea of "Literacy" should include new media to serve the democratic ideal of an educated and informed citizenry; Critical analysis of media should be emphasized over judgment of particular media or their content; Media literacy is not equivalent to technological or vocational mastery of production tools; Collaboration between children of the digital age and media professionals from varying backgrounds create teachable moments for the key principles of media literacy; Beyond access to technology, increased learning and media literacy through the use of new media requires adequate planning and support personnel.

classrooms, as well as MacBook laptops for use in the second through fifth grade classrooms.[34]

TPS is a diverse and multicultural elementary school that has taken great efforts to integrate media technology into its classrooms and curriculum. While the NYC Department of Education does not require the use of desktops and laptops in first grade classrooms, the principal, administrators, and teachers at TPS have made technology a priority in hopes of preparing their students for success. TPS is a Title I school with just over 94% of its students qualifying as "low-income" according to the definition determined by the U.S. Department of Education.[35] 15.7% of the students are African American, 31.3% are Hispanic, 28.6% are Asian and 22.5% are White.[36] In addition, the 528-person student body represents over thirty different languages and cultures.

A. Production-Based Media Literacy Curricula

The Commission should consider using entrepreneurial models like The Media Spot to promote collaborative media literacy curriculum development and sharing among teachers of the same, and even different schools across the country. In addition, it is critical that the FCC help to support and promote the integration of dedicated technology maintenance staff in public schools so that the various technology tools can be utilized for their intended purposes.

In order to incorporate media literacy into the TPS curriculum, Mr. Daunic met with the first grade teachers in five planning sessions to develop a model curriculum for all four classrooms. This curriculum is then shared on a password protected portion of the TPS website in a GoogleDoc format so that teachers can collaborate with one another to determine best practices. Mr. Daunic teaches the teachers how to use the various technologies that will be incorporated into the lesson, as well as effective ways the teachers can encourage the first-grade students to take ownership of the project. For example, on the day of my visit, the students were involved in a book review project where one student uses iMovie to video record another student who provides information about why they like a certain book they read in class.[37] Mr. Daunic had already met with the teachers multiple times to focus on the education "ownership" technique where students become teachers. At the start of class, one student listened to the teacher explain how to use the iMovie software, including: what buttons to push to turn the camera on, how to record, how to stop recording, how to save their work, how to delete clips, and how to put the video clips together into a cohesive movie. Instead of having the teacher model the various steps, however, the child was in control of the mouse and had to point and click according to the teacher's instructions. I was amazed at

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[34] For more information on "Resolution A," see selection information at http://oitqueens.wikispaces.com/file/view/ResoAFY2009Implementation&SelectionForm.pdf

[35] http://schools.nyc.gov/documents/oaosi/cepdata/2008-09/cepdata_K130.pdf

[36] Ibid.

[37] Some of these videos can be found at http://ps130brooklyn.com/

how quickly the children picked-up these skills and remembered each individual step with very few reminders from their teachers.

The next step in the video production was having the second student share their book review on camera while the first student operated the iMovie recording features. The children giving their book reviews quickly learned where to stand and how to hold their book cover so the camera could capture the image. In addition, the children gained practice in focusing on and effectively articulating exactly what they enjoyed about a particular book. Once the first student pair completed their video, the student operating the camera took on the role of "teacher" for the next student, taking the skills that they learned from their classroom teacher and conveying them to the next student. Mr. Daunic's method requires the "student teacher" to relinquish control of the mouse, forcing them to verbally articulate to the new student how to operate the program. This second student then films the next book review and the cycle continues. The use of video technology in the classroom helps children gain practical technology skills, but also reinforces the teacher's more traditional curriculum through a new medium.

The Commission should work to ensure that proper technology staff is available in schools so that media literacy programs can operate effectively. While Mr. Daunic spends the majority of the class periods working with the teachers and students on the day's project, he is also required to fill the role of a technology staff person to solve any technical issues and to keep the computers maintained with software updates. While the schools "Resolution A" grant covers the cost of purchasing the computers, the grant does not pay for maintenance of those machines. As such, Mr. Daunic becomes the de facto computer repairman because no one else is able to fill this gap. Mr. Daunic often feels frustrated that the teachers may not be able to rely on the computers as teaching tools on days that he is not in the classroom because of routine problems they are not trained to address. Having a trained and dedicated technology maintenance person on staff at public schools is critical to ensure the technologies are available when needed.

B. Reinforcing Traditional Literacy and Critical Thinking Skills

Mr. Daunic's program provides the Commission with an excellent model for how media literacy integration helps to reinforce and emphasize the important skills associated with early childhood literacy and critical thinking. In addition, Mr. Daunic's work with high school students at Franklin K. Lane in Brooklyn, NY demonstrates how media literacy can help to bring at-risk youth back to the classroom.

While media literacy goes far beyond the traditional model of "procedural" technology integration (i.e. teaching children how to turn the computer on and off, etc.), these procedural skills must be mastered in the earlier grade levels so students can fully utilize various technologies in the upper grades. The difference in Mr. Daunic's media literacy teaching method, however, is that the students learn these procedural skills as a secondary effect of learning the art of digital storytelling. Aside from learning how to use a mouse, for example, the first graders at TPS are learning valuable lessons about reading. Students who are quiet and shy, for example, are pushed to speak-up and enunciate so that the computer microphone can pick up their words. After recording a video clip, the students play back the video for the speaker and help them to decide if the audio is satisfactory or whether they need to re-record.

While many adults have only recently begun to utilize video technology to instantaneously evaluate their public speaking skills, first-graders at TPS are learning to critically evaluate their speech patterns and effectiveness at a very young age.

Mr. Daunic's third and fourth grade students also acquire valuable skills through the art of character role-play and reading aloud for fluency. Students in one fourth grade class, for example, recorded voice-overs using iMovie to accompany the book they were reading in their classroom. Each student in a group was required to read from a script while playing a character from the book. Several of the children used different voices for different characters and were able to practice their dramatic reading skills instead of merely reading the book silently to themselves. These projects help students and their teachers become more aware of each student's literary strengths and weaknesses.

As noted in Part II above, students in low-income school districts often dropout of school because they feel that what they learn in a traditional classroom setting is inapplicable to the realities they face in their own homes and neighborhoods. To combat this problem, Mr. Daunic utilizes the same "student teaching student" method applied at TPS with students at Franklin K. Lane High School (Franklin) in the Cypress Hills neighborhood of Brooklyn. This method of encouraging education ownership provides the FCC with an excellent model for how media literacy courses can bring students back to the classroom.

Franklin is a struggling urban public high school that will be closing in three years as a result of No Child Left Behind. While most of the highest performing students have already left Franklin, one teacher noted that some students with continual absenteeism actually started returning to Franklin after Mr. Daunic began his "Digital Tutorial Designers" media literacy program in her classroom. These tutorials are student-made video recordings available online to other students to assist them in preparing for the NYS Integrated Algebra Regents Exam.[38] The first step in the project requires students to use laptops to photograph solutions to the problems they have already worked out by hand. Next, through a combination of narration and "video doodling" on the screen, students explain their strategies and steps for solving each math problem. Once their initial solutions and strategies are recorded, students can respond to and add to each other's comments, as well as ask and answer follow-up questions to clarify their thinking and explanations.[39] Bringing this new technology to the classroom helps to engage "at risk" students while encouraging them to collaborate more effectively with one another.

Part V: Conclusions

Both the Science Leadership Academy (SLA) and The Media Spot (TMS) provide the Commission with excellent examples of the beneficial effects media literacy can have on low-income students in urban public schools. These benefits, however, carry these students far

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[38] To see a video about the Digital Tutorial Designers project, visit http://themediaspot.org/blog/students_tutorial_designers_documentary_high_school_math_voicethread_production_1

[39] Ibid.

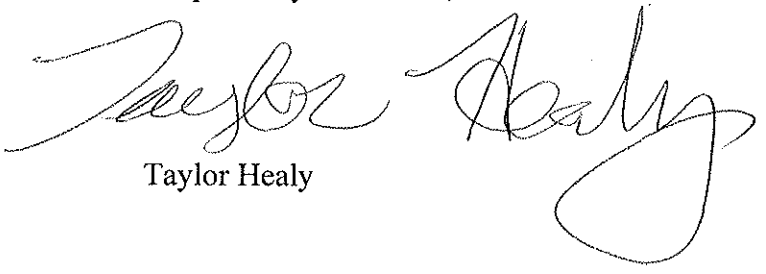
beyond the classroom by giving them the practical and critical thinking skills necessary to succeed in the workplace. While there are obvious funding limitations that make it difficult to implement an SLA one-to-one laptop model across the board in public schools, the Commission should work with the Department of Education to emphasize the importance of media literacy, not just in one or two classes per day, but in every facet of a school's curriculum. SLA demonstrates for the Commission that media literacy goes beyond merely knowing how to use various computer programs and how to be a safe Internet user; it encompasses collaboration, discerning between various resources available, and fully utilizing and integrating technology into every day student work.

It is clear that schools like SLA with highly trained teachers who are familiar with technology tools are the exception and not the rule, which is why Mr. Daunic's work with TMS provides an excellent model for an alternative solution to media literacy education. It would realistically be very difficult for all teachers to become experts in all of the technologies available to us in the digital age, but Mr. Daunic's program serves as an example of the excellent entrepreneurial pilot programs that the FCC should be working to replicate in other cities. Because funding for technology services in public schools is limited, these schools are clearly forced to choose between having the physical technology available to students and hiring someone to be able to help the students utilize the technology effectively. Schools should not have to make this choice. The FCC needs to work with federal Department of Education and the state education boards to emphasize that this "outsourcing" of media literacy education is a way to fill the technology education gap until, ideally, all schools could find teachers and resources like those currently available at technology magnet schools like SLA.

Technology has the potential to serve as the great equalizer for students from low-income school districts across the country. With the support of federal agencies like the FCC, I believe that the media literacy concepts discussed in this comment could be "scaled up" to generate greater success for a much larger number of students.

I appreciate the opportunity to submit these comments to the Commission.

Respectfully Submitted,



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